

DRAFT
Summary of the
Board of Directors Teleconference
February 25, 1999

The Board of Directors of the National Environmental Laboratory Accreditation Conference convened by teleconference on Thursday, February 25, 1999 at 1:30 p.m. The meeting was led by the Board chair, Dr. Ken Jackson. The action items are shown in Attachment A, the incomplete action items are shown Attachment B and the list of participants are shown in Attachment C.

Approval of Minutes and Review of Action Items

The minutes of the February 4, 1999 teleconference were approved with some minor changes and the action items from the last meeting and past meetings were reviewed for completeness.

EPA Support of NELAC

Dr. Charles Hartwig reported on a conversation that he had with Mr. Russell Wright, Region 4, USEPA, regarding support of EPA to NELAC. Mr. Wright, who serves as co-chair of the Environmental Monitory Management Council's (EMMC) Laboratory Accreditation Panel, stated that during the most recent meeting of the EMMC Steering Committee, it appeared that the level of support within the Agency for NELAC has diminished. A proposal was put forth to continue support for the next 2-3 years, but to transfer the responsibility to the states in the future. Mr. Wright suggested that reasons behind this position may stem from EPA upper management not being adequately informed of the progress and impact of NELAC, the potential reorganization of NELAC within the Agency not being fully defined, and the cutback of resources to the Agency overall. Dr. Hartwig proposed that better communication between the EPA participants, active in NELAC, and their supervisors might assist in solidifying support for NELAC. Dr. Hartwig recommended that a cost evaluation be prepared to highlight the benefits of NELAC. He also pointed out that some of these same issues were addressed in 1991 by a federal advisory committee (Committee on National Accreditation of Environmental Laboratories) and that a restatement of those findings and recommendations would be valuable for EPA officials not involved with NELAC at that time. The Board agreed with Dr. Hartwig's recommendation and resolved to issue a brief summary of the benefits and background of NELAC, appreciation of the Agency's current and past support, and a request for continuing support in the future. The summary and a request for a meeting with selected members of the Board will be sent to the Acting Deputy Administrator Peter Robertson. The Board will also seek meetings with Assistant Administrators Norine Noonan, Office of Research and Development, and Chuck Fox, Office of Water, as the Board was unable to meet with them during the Interim Meeting in January.

ELAB Recommendations

Ms. Jeanne Mourrain provided a draft copy of all ELAB recommendations to date. Ms. Betsy Dutrow will finalize the document and assign each recommendation to the appropriate committee or the Board for action.

General Information and Updates

- S** Dr. Pearson reported that NELAC VI would be held either in Williamsburg or Virginia Beach.
- S** Ms. Batterton agreed to speak at the Association for Food and Drug Officials in San Antonio, TX, June 4, 1999.
- S** Ms. Dutrow will substitute for Ms. Mourrain at the Water Environment Federation meeting in October in New Orleans, LA.
- S** Dr. Jackson reported that he would be participating in the NELAC presentation given by Jerry Parr and Chuck Wibby in Michigan in April.
- S** Greater Buffalo Environmental Association has asked Dr. Jackson to speak to them about small laboratory issues in April.
- S** Ms. Mourrain reported that she sent a message to all the Accrediting Authority applicants regarding adoption of the 1999 standards for evaluating laboratories and that she received no negative replies.
- S** Dr. Jackson reported that he has not received the official version of the DOD comments.
- S** Ms. Mourrain reported that the Office of General Counsel approved the use of the video satellite broadcast facilities by a state providing laboratory assessor training.
- S** Dr. Jackson stated that the committee chairs were very positive about participating in some of the Board teleconferences. The next meeting will be a joint meeting with the chairs.
- S** The March and April meetings have been rescheduled. They are now April 1 and April 30. The call-in numbers will remain the same.

Laboratory Inspections Prior to Formal NELAP Recognition

Ms. Batterton reported that a concern regarding laboratory inspections had been brought to her attention. The concern is whether laboratories that have been inspected immediately before the state is granted accrediting authority will have to be reinspected. She stated that after consulting

with others, her reply was that they would not have to repeat the on-site audit if they were comfortable that they had inspected the laboratory according to the 1999 standards. It was suggested that a proposal be written for the accrediting authorities stating that a on-site inspection may or may not be required depending on the date of the last inspection and submit this issue with the proposed answer to ELAB for their consideration. Further action would be taken taking into consideration ELAB's comments and advice. ELAB will be asked to include this issue in an upcoming teleconference (March 9, 1999).

Reply to USGS on Charter and Mission for MDCB

Ms. Mourrain stated that she has provided suggested changes to the mission statement and charter of the Laboratory Accreditation Work Group of the Methods and Data Comparability Board (MDCB) as shown in the Agenda attachments. The Board indicated that they were in agreement with the modifications and also with the cover letter and recommended that it be sent forward.

Field Measurement & Sampling Recommendations

The Board had asked the Field Activities Committee to draft some options on how to handle the issue of sampling. An issue paper has been submitted by the Committee listing five (5) options, the pros and cons of those options, and finally the Committee's recommendation. Ms. Batterton stated that the Committee was asking the Board either to concur on their recommendation or to give them direction to pursue a different option. **Note: A final decision regarding the use of any of the options was not reached during this meeting. Further discussion will be scheduled.**

Indian Tribes as NELAC Voting Members

Ms. Marlene Regelski, Office of Water, American Indian Environmental Office, discussed environmental issues and the Indians Nations. She stated that many of the tribes are building their own laboratories and wanted the ability to self assess them. Many have gone through water quality standards implementation and have their own waste water and drinking water facilities. Her office is trying to assess how the tribes can enter into the accreditation process as well as have their own accreditation authority established. The question of how tribes enter into a NELAC process was discussed. Ms. Regelski suggested that the Regions, who meet quarterly with tribal leaders, might help with this process or that a survey could be conducted. It was decided that the Board working with Ms. Regelski would write an issue paper describing the NELAC process, recognizing that the Indian Tribes would prefer to serve as accrediting authorities, proposing the mechanism to become an accrediting authority, and outlining the

benefits. Along with this, the Tribes would be polled as to their interest in becoming accrediting authorities. Ms. Regelski suggested this be done through the National Tribal Environmental Council and the InterTribal Council of Arizona. This will also be coordinated with ELAB where the Indian tribes have representation.

**Action Items
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Item No.	Action	Status
1.	Ms. Carol Batterton will get the information on the book regarding Roberts Rules for the future training session.	
2.	The Board agreed to prepare a cost benefit analysis and background document showing the consequences of EPA's not supporting NELAC.	
3.	Dr. Jackson, Dr. Pearson, and Ms. Batterton agreed to request appointments with EPA officials to better explain the benefits of NELAC.	
4.	Ms. Dutrow will distribute the ELAB recommendations to the proper committees or to the Board.	
5.	Ms. Batterton and Dr. Brokopp will write a solution to the issue of whether laboratories need another on-site inspection if they were inspected immediately before the state was granted accrediting authority.	
6.	Dr. Gary King will be asked to work on the issue paper for the Indian Tribes with Ms. Regelski.	

Incomplete Action Items from Past Teleconferences

Item No.	Date of Teleconference	Action	Status
1.	02/04/99	Ms. Mourrain, Ms. Batterton, Ms. Sample and Dr. Hartwig will work on developing a training program for the Committee Chairs.	
2.	01/11/99	The interim report concerning small laboratory issues will be posted on the website.	On-going
3.	01/11/99	Committee Chairs are to prepare "Frequently Asked Questions" for posting on the website. They are to submit these to Dr. Irene Ronning.	On-going
4.	01/07/99	Ms. Mourrain, Ms. Dutrow and Mr. Slayton will develop a policy on handling of comments and, also, will develop a standardized letter.	On-going
5.	11/19/98	Ms. Dutrow is to check on the status of the response for OW to the Federal Register Notice on PT.	On-going
6.	11/19/98	Dr. Jackson will prepare a generic letter to be sent with the application package regarding small laboratories.	On-going
7.	11/19/98	Ms. Betsy Dutrow will make a note to invite someone from the Interagency Task Force Methods Comparability Board to make a presentation at the Annual meeting in Saratoga Springs.	On-going

**List of Participants
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Name	Affiliation	Telephone Numbers
Dr. Ken Jackson, Chair	NY Dept. of Health	Tel.: 518-485-5570 Fax: 518-485-5568 e-mail: jackson@wadsworth.org
Dr. Jim Pearson, Chair-elect	Virginia Div. of Consolidated Laboratory Services	Tel: 804-786-7905 Fax: 804-371-7973 e-mail: jpearson@dgs.state.va.us
Ms. Carol Batterton, Past-Chair	TNRCC	Tel: 512-239-6300 Fax: 512-239-6307 email: cbattert@tnrcc.state.tx.us
Dr. Charles Brokopp	UT Division of Laboratory Services	Tel: 801-584-8450 Fax: 801-584-8486 email: cbrokopp@doh.state.ut.us
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Ms. Betsy Dutrow, Executive Secretary- Absent	USEPA, ORD	Tel: 202-564-9061 Fax: 202-565-2441 e-mail: dutrow.elizabeth@epamail.epa.gov
Ms. Pat Sheridan for Ms. Barbara Finazzo	USEPA, Region II	Tel: 732-321-6754 Fax: 732-321-4381 e-mail: finazzo.barbara@epamail.epa.gov
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